

U.S. Assistance to Georgia

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New Hydropower Plant Opens in Tusheti

On August 31, Ambassador John Bass joined the Minister of Energy of Georgia Alexandre Khetaguri to celebrate the opening of the Shenako micro hydropower plant in the village of Shenako, Tusheti. The hydropower facility will provide clean, renewable energy to 60 families in the village, as well as to nearby border guard stations. The US Government provided technical assistance and over \$87,000 in funding to the project over three years through USAID and its implementing partner, Winrock International. The electricity generated by the hydropower plant will encourage new economic opportunities, including tourism development in the remote and mountainous region. The plant can generate enough power to support Shenako and neighboring villages. Because of its

remote, mountainous location, Shenako has not had reliable access to electricity since 1988, when a transmission line was damaged. The project was completed with significant contributions of time and labor from the community of Shenako and with the cooperation of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, which recently completed the transmission line to the village.



Ambassador John Bass and the Minister of Energy Alexandre Khetaguri in Tusheti

Judicial Reform Project Celebrates Achievements

On September 26, Ambassador John Bass together with Konstantine Kublashvili, Chairman of the Supreme Court of Georgia, and Valeri Tsertsvadze, Secretary of the High Council of Justice celebrated achievements of USAID's Judicial Administration and Management Reform (JAMR) project. Over the past four years, the JAMR project has increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the court system by rising the professionalism of court management procedures, reducing the case load for judges, and training court

managers – a new profession that frees judges to focus on their judicial functions.



Ambassador Bass talking with press about judicial reform achievements

The project has also provided more than \$210,000 of audio recording equipment to the judiciary. This equipment is already used in over 80 courts in Georgia to improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability of court proceedings by recording them. Through this project and others the U.S. Government is helping the judiciary continue to make the courts in Georgia more efficient, fair, and transparent.

Intellectual Property Customs Enforcement and Coordination Workshop

The Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) of the U.S. Department of Commerce held a three-day Eurasia Intellectual Property Customs Enforcement and Coordination Workshop on October 26-28, in Tbilisi. The workshop was designed to improve the coordination and collaboration between customs authorities of Armenia, Georgia and Turkey in order to better interdict IP infringing goods, including counterfeit and pirated goods. In addition, the program provided a forum for the U.S. and international intellectual property rights holders to provide training to regional customs officials on product identification. CLDP brought customs officials from the three countries together for interactive sessions and presentations on enforcement of IPR, counterfeit product identification, investigation of IP infringing goods, and methods of coordination among the various customs officials.



Kvareli kids enjoying the renovated cafeteria

Department of State Humanitarian Grantees Provide Support to Local Communities

On October 11, *hellenicare*, a Department of State Humanitarian Program implementing partner, celebrated the opening of a medical clinic, the renovation of which was done by a local organization, the Greek Medical Fund “Hippocrates.” The clinic, located in the village of Irage in Kvemo-Kartli, will provide medical services to 257 families. The local municipality will pay for a doctor and two nurses working at the clinic. Medicine and medical supplies will be donated by the DoS Office of Humanitarian Assistance. This project is one of eight Small Reconstruction Projects implemented by various DoS humanitarian program grantees this year. Others include UMCOR’s renovation of the Anaklia Kindergarten and Keda Outpatient Clinic in Western Georgia; the renovation of the kindergarten at the Kvareli Gymnasium by ACTS Georgia; and the Kvareli Gymnasium Cafeteria and Kitchen refurbished by Counterpart International. In November 2011, Counterpart also finished the renovation of an outpatient clinic in Tsmin-datskali IDP Settlement, Shida Kartli, which will provide medical services for 480 IDP families in the settlement.

Say Cheese! Koba Subeliani, the Minister for IDPs, Refugees and Accommodations, with UNHCR/Georgia’s Rita Richter and Tbilisi Refugee Coordinator Greg Gardner, opens a new cooperative cheese-production facility benefitting over 1,000 IDPs from Abkhazia in the central Georgian village of Kopitnari on October 13. The facility was built by the United Methodist Committee on Relief as part of PRM’s \$10million grant through UNHCR for protection and integration of IDPs in Georgia.



New Strategy for Ensuring Gender Equality

On September 24, Bridget Brink, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Georgia, joined the Speaker of Parliament Davit Bakradze, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Rusudan Kervalishvili, and the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Sweden, Åsa Pousard, to deliver opening remarks at a conference to promote the National Action Plan 2011-2013 for Ensuring Gender Equality. The Action Plan, which was adopted by the Parliament of Georgia, aims to ensure that gender equality is a key consideration in fundamental areas such as health and social protection, education, economics, security, political participation, and environmental protection.

Approximately 200 guests, including government officials, diplomats, development professionals, and independent experts attended the conference. Participants reviewed the National Action Plan for Ensuring Gender Equality and strategies for implementation and solicited feedback from civil society organizations on how to best carry out the activities and achieve the goals of the plan.



Bridget Brink, DCM of the U.S. Embassy and Davit Bakradze, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia

The conference was organized by the National Democratic Institute in partnership with the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia and with funding by USAID together with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

U.S. Speaker Leads a Roundtable on IPR Issues with Georgian Investigators

On October 3, the Public Affairs Office sponsored U.S. Speaker on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Tim Trainer in leading a roundtable for representatives of the Revenue Service and Investigation Service of the Ministry of Finance (MOF) of Georgia. Georgian investigators briefed Mr. Trainer on main tasks and responsibilities that they have and overviewed major challenges that the Investigation Service of the MOF currently faces. The roundtable provided Georgian prosecutors and

representatives of the Revenue Service with the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to IPR protection. Mr. Trainer shared his experience and gave valuable recommendations on ways how to combat copyright problems and related cyber space violations. The speaker emphasized that for an adequate protection of IPR, it is essential that the Government of Georgia regularly reaches out to different business communities and “Sakpatenti” (Georgian patent and trademark agency) in order to keep them constantly

informed about government initiatives and policies. Mr. Trainer also highlighted possible risk factors associated with the IPR protection and discussed several investigation cases that helped Georgian prosecutors to enrich their professional knowledge.



Discussion at the Ministry of Finance

Ninth Annual EducationUSA Fair in Tbilisi



Students at the IREX booth

Deputy Chief of Mission Bridget Brink delivered opening remarks at the Ninth Annual EducationUSA Fair on October, 11, organized by the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS), the Center for International Education and Kvali Edu-

cation Advising Center. Several hundred students gathered at the Georgian National Museum to talk to representatives of Georgetown, Ohio State, Vanderbilt, Grinnell and 10 more colleges and universities about the scholarship opportunities and the application process. American Councils for International Educa-

tion, IREX and PAS staff presented information about USG exchange programs. Fifteen visitors were awarded U.S. Standard Test preparation books and EducationUSA T-shirts at the PAS-sponsored traditional lottery drawing.

EducationUSA Fair is an excellent opportunity to promote U.S. higher education and educate prospective applicants on how to individually apply to U.S. universities, and USG exchange programs.

The 31st Infantry Battalion has completed rigorous training under vigilant guidance and advisement from the United States Marines — experienced combat veterans

The 31st Infantry Battalion Deploys to Afghanistan

On 25 October, U.S. military service members assigned to the Tbilisi Office of Defense Cooperation and Krtsanisi Training Area (KTA) came together with the Georgian Armed Forces Leadership to bid a farewell to the Republic of Georgia Armed Forces 31st Infantry Battalion deploying to Afghanistan in support of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) operations.

The unit consists of Georgian soldiers and attached U.S. military personnel. The Battalion has deployed to Helmand province in southern Afghanistan and will operate out of Camp “Leatherneck”— a Forward Operating Base with over 14,000 military personnel.

A large percentage of the deploying soldiers have extensive experience obtained during previous combat tours in Afghanistan. The majority of the soldiers have completed their combat training according to NATO standards and have the latest equipment at their disposal — from the uniforms to the weapons and weapons accessories that are available to the most modern infantry units. The 31st Infantry Battalion has completed rigorous training under vigilant guidance and advisement from the U.S. Marines — experienced combat veterans assigned to the KTA in support of the joint U.S.-Georgian training mission.

Georgian Armed Forces contribution to the ISAF antiterrorism mission is an important contribution to the success of the NATO and partners’ coalition. We hope for a safe return of all Soldiers after their completion of the 6-month tour in Afghanistan.



Before boarding the plane

from right to left: Commander of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, Georgian Armed Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Dzindzibadze, U.S. Marine Major Mueller, U.S. Army Major Solinsky, and U.S. Army Captain Krekotnev.

Universal Corn Harvesters for Georgian Farmers

On August 23, Ambassador John Bass transferred ten universal corn harvesters from the United States Government to the Georgian Ministry of Agriculture as part of the USDA Food and Progress program. Working in cooperation with the Georgian Ministry of Agriculture, USDA/Georgia procured ten universal corn harvesters worth approximately \$2,560,300 in August 2011. These agricultural harvesters will be accessible for (leased to) the farmers and farmer associations through state-run farm mechanization centers. Eight farm service centers were established in five regions of Georgia through partnership

of USDA with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ambassador noted that the U.S. Embassy is working with the Ministry to help Georgian farmers be more efficient, productive, and self-sufficient and to improve productivity and expand trade of agricultural products. In thanking the Ambassador, the (now ex-) Minister of Agriculture Bakur Kvezereli noted that this assistance is crucial for the development of Georgian Agriculture. In addition, he indicated that the modern agricultural machinery will enable farmers to harvest their crops in an efficient way and cut down operating costs.

The goal of USDA's program in Georgia is to increase Georgia's integration into the global agricultural market by building the capacity of both government institutions and private farmers and the agrobusiness community at large.



John Ashworth, Demna Dzirkvadze, Gigi Tsiklauri, Ambassador John Bass and Bakur Kvezereli (and 2 of 10 harvesters) at the transfer ceremony

RLA Program Trains Georgian Witness Security Unit

In order to assist in developing the Witness Security (Witsec) Unit's capacity to support successful implementation of the Criminal Procedure Code, INL/DOJ Regional Legal Advisor program organized the visit of U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) who delivered 2 one-week, back to back training courses for Georgian Witsec officers in August. The training program included classroom exercise at the Police Academy and tactical skills trainings in a firearms range and the driv-

ing location. USMS inspectors delivered classes on theory and practice of witness protection and protective service operations for personnel who will conduct a protective service operations. Georgian Witsec Unit, a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Special Operations Department, received instruction and feedback from veteran USMS WITSEC members. The USMS team also gave feedback and advice on how Georgia can improve internal Witsec protocols, legislation, and how to create a meaningful and long-term inter-

nal training regiment. RLA program continues to work with the Witsec Unit and with Ministry of Justice prosecutors to ensure that all relevant legislative and operational implements are in place.



Graduates of the training

America-Georgia Business Council Conference

Ambassador John Bass and Prime Minister Nika Gilauri opened the 14th annual American-Georgian Business Council conference, held in Tbilisi on October 25. The energy, transport and communication, tourism, and agriculture sectors of Georgia were the main focus of the conference. During the conference, the Ambassador signed a loan agreement between OPIC and Teliani Valley vineyard. The conference also included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the USAID Economic Prosperity Initiative project and the American National Standards Institute.

The America-Georgia Business Council was formed in 1998 to support business relations between the two nations.

The Civic Engagement Centers are an important part of the U.S. Government's commitment to helping the people of Georgia to become more active participants in their democracy.

Center for Civic Engagement in Ozurgeti

On November 4, Ambassador John Bass formally inaugurated the first Center for Civic Engagement in Ozurgeti. At the opening event, Ambassador Bass joined members of the Ozurgeti community in a discussion on the transparency of information and civic engagement concerning the economic development plan for the Bakhmaro resort.

The center is one of ten U.S. Government-funded centers that will operate in cities throughout Georgia to offer the public places to gather and confidently engage in open debate and discourse on issues of public concern. The process of fostering dialogue is intended to encourage civic engagement and improve transparency.

across the country in the cities of Ozurgeti, Kutaisi, Telavi, Gori, Zugdidi, Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Rustavi, Marneuli, and Gurjaani.

Each center will offer a resource library and internet connection to the general public to help them pursue action on issues of importance to themselves and their communities. Professional staff at each center will facilitate at least two issue-based events per month, and will bring in members of political parties and elected officials to meet with the public in town-hall style meetings in the run-up to the 2012 and 2013 elections. The public, civil society organizations, informal community groups, political party members, and independent journalists are welcome to use the center's meeting space free of charge on an equitable, first-come, first-served basis, to community groups. Each center is operated under a publically-posted code of conduct, with clearly stated rules of operation for every visitor to see.

The centers are an important part of the U.S. Government's commitment to helping the people of Georgia to become more active participants in their democracy.

The centers are leased and operated for the people of those cities by the USAID on behalf of the American people. The U.S. Government has invested \$5 million in the ten centers opening

Ambassador John Bass opening the first Center for Civic Engagement in Ozurgeti



Qvevri Symposium: Celebration of Winemaking

On September 15, at the Georgian National Museum, Ambassador John Bass participated in the opening of the Qvevri Symposium, a three day event celebrating Georgian winemaking techniques and traditions. The symposium was supported in part by the U.S.

Government's Economic Prosperity Initiative (EPI), a four-year, \$40 million project designed to improve the competitiveness of various sectors of the Georgian economy.

Approximately sixty international guests – wine experts, wine writers, and wine tourism and marketing professionals visited Georgia to learn about qvevri wines, traditional wines fermented in buried clay pots that have been made in Georgia since ancient times. The symposium included professional lectures, historic and modern winery visits, Georgian cuisine, wine tastings, and an introduction to the polyphonic songs, poetry

and other traditions that surround wine culture in Georgia. The event was organized in partnership with the Georgian Wine Association and Georgian Incoming Tour Operators Association and took place mostly in Kakheti.



EPI is actively involved in the wine and wine tourism industry because of the tremendous competitive potential of the sector. The project, administered by the USAID, is helping the sector improve the quality of services,

build the capacity of wine tourism industry associations, and support marketing to promote the country as a significant destination for global wine tourism. Through these efforts and others the U.S. Government is helping to further the growth of the Georgian economy and create prosperity for the people of Georgia.

Cochran Fellows Reunion

On September 1, Alan Meltzer, Chief of Political/Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy Tbilisi hosted USDA Cochran Fellowship Program reunion reception. The objective of the reunion was to revitalize and strengthen the Cochran Fellowship Alumni network and to enhance working relations with the U.S. Embassy and the USDA.



Guests at the reunion

USDA's Cochran Fellowship is a short-term (2-3 weeks) exchange training program for senior and mid-level agriculturists, managers and administrators concerned with agricultural development, trade, agribusiness management, and marketing for both the private and public sector players. The Fellowship provides high-quality training to assist Georgians to develop agricultural systems necessary to meet the food and fiber needs of domestic population and to strengthen and enhance trade linkages with the U.S. and other countries.

New USAID Mission Director

Stephen Haykin was sworn in as Mission Director for USAID Georgia. "I am delighted that I have been given the opportunity to return to the Europe and Eurasia Bureau and contribute to the excellent work that USAID has been doing in Georgia. I look forward to working with the entire US Government team in Georgia to further strengthen our strong relations with Georgia and assist in the country's remarkable development progress" stated Haykin in his remarks at the ceremony on September 8.

Over 140 fellows have received training through the Fellowship and have traveled to every corner of the United States, from Florida to Hawaii. They have seen the methods and strategies that make American

food safe, inexpensive, and readily available. Ten Georgian fellows were selected to participate in 2012 training course on agricultural extension and greenhouse development. Meanwhile ten Fellowship graduates have returned from the U.S. trained in animal health and agricultural cooperatives.

Ambassador Launched New Economic Opportunities Initiative



Ambassador Bass at the launch of NEO

On October 21, Ambassador John Bass joined the governor of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region Tsezar Chocheli, government representatives and community members in the village of Kvesheti to officially launch the New Economic Opportunities (NEO) project in Georgia.

NEO is a \$20.5 million four-year U.S. Government program designed to improve rural incomes, reduce poverty levels, improve food security, and address water constraints in targeted communities. The program will also help communities of internally displaced persons to work cooperatively on shared issues. Over the next four years, the NEO project aims to benefit at least 70,000 rural and vulnerable households in ten municipalities: Dusheti, Stepantsminda, Kareli, Gori, Khashuri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi, Zugdidi, Tsalenjikha. The program is administered through USAID.

At the event, Ambassador Bass joined a community meeting in Kvesheti to discuss the NEO project, answered questions, and met local entrepreneurs and community representatives. NEO is designed to help municipalities and communities like Kvesheti to identify and implement infrastructure projects that have direct economic benefits, to facilitate the attraction of investments, and to develop links between the communities and larger economic markets. It will also provide grants, training, and technical assistance to the communities. Overall, the project will follow opportunities to support increased growth, employment, and household incomes.

HALO Trust Completes Mine Clearance in Abkhazia

With support from the governments of the United Kingdom, United States, and the Netherlands, HALO Trust has declared the area of Abkhazia mine-free. HALO Trust has operated in Georgia since 1997. With financing and support from these three governments and other donors, HALO Trust has cleared over 300 minefields covering an area of over 1,500 hectares. Hundreds of HALO deminers, recruited and hired from the local community, have found and safely destroyed almost 10,000 mines and almost 50,000 items of explosive ordnance. Humanitarian mine clearance completion is vital to the return of Internally Displaced Persons and will undoubtedly save countless lives. Access to previously unusable land has also

resulted in positive economic development; cleared land, for example, has been converted to productive agricultural use. On 4 November, representatives from the U.S. and British Embassies travelled to the Abkhazia region of Georgia to participate in a ceremony that marked the completion of humanitarian mine clearance by HALO Trust. Donors visited a cleared minefield that is now used as a vineyard. To respond to any isolated reports of remaining explosive remnants, HALO Trust will continue running a small, local office. While mine-clearance in Abkhazia has concluded, HALO's work in the rest of Georgia continues. With on-going assistance from international donors, HALO Trust continues its work in the rest of Georgia to clear Soviet legacy minefields and enable the local population to use the land safely.

HAPPY UPCOMING HOLIDAYS!

Submit your story for the next issue to Irine Gabriadze: GabriadzeI@state.gov

<http://georgia.usembassy.gov>